# My friends call me Murphy. You call me... mean names that hurt my feelings.

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

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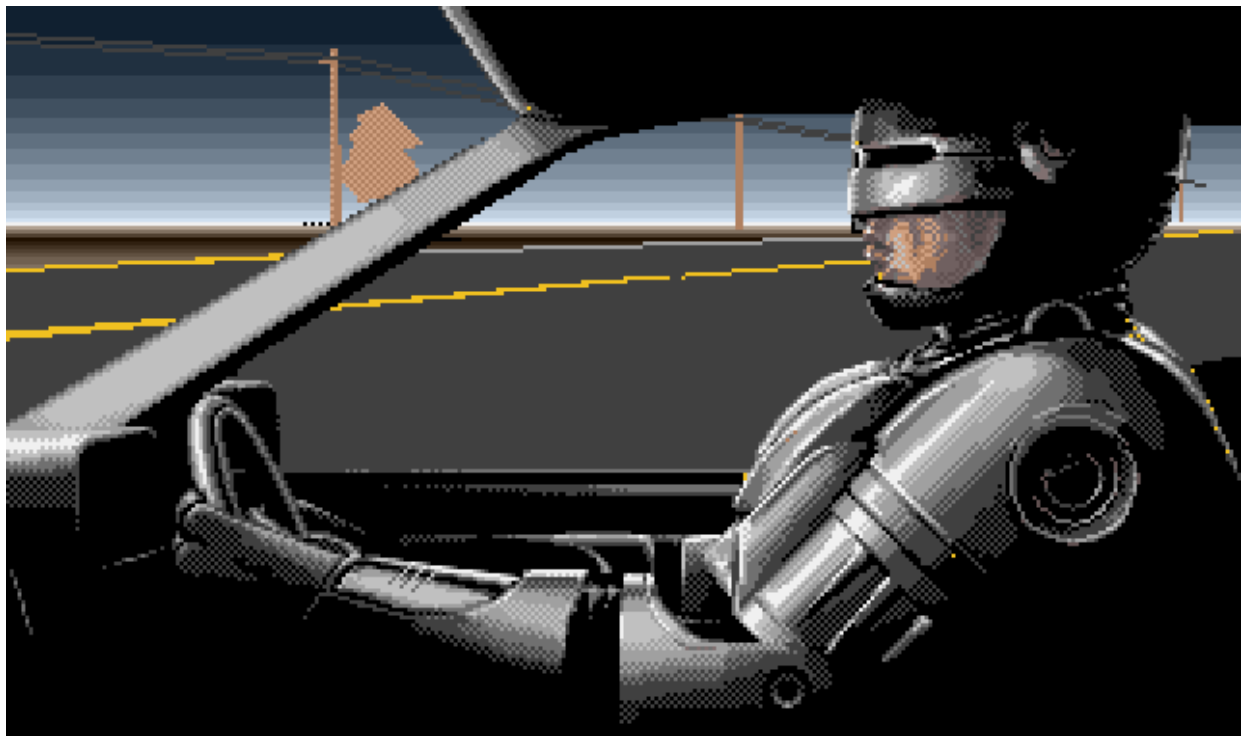
You might assume that a Spectrum port of the Amiga's 3D polygonal RoboCop game wouldn't be technically feasible... and you'd be right. That's why Probe's effort plays more like the *first* Spectrum RoboCop game after slurping a few Red Bulls, taking a crash course in gymnastics and a trip to jetpacks-r-us.com. He'd need to be pretty agile to deal with all those erratically excitable, leaping robot ninjas.
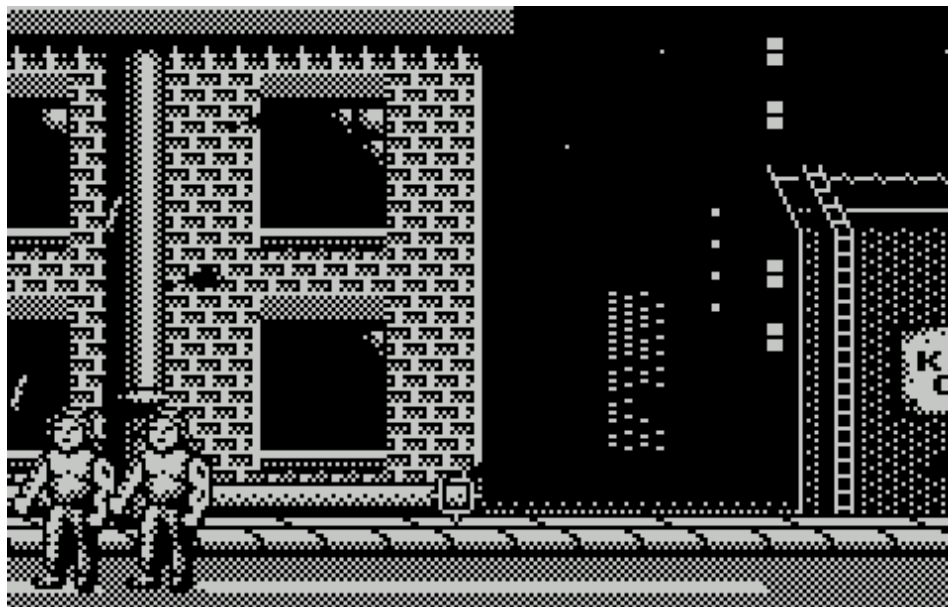
RoboCop 3, the movie, took a few bizarre detours from the franchise's established lore, and as such, you'd expect the game to follow suit. It doesn't disappoint, unlike the awful third movie which many fans of the series wish had never happened. Full stop, period, sayonara.
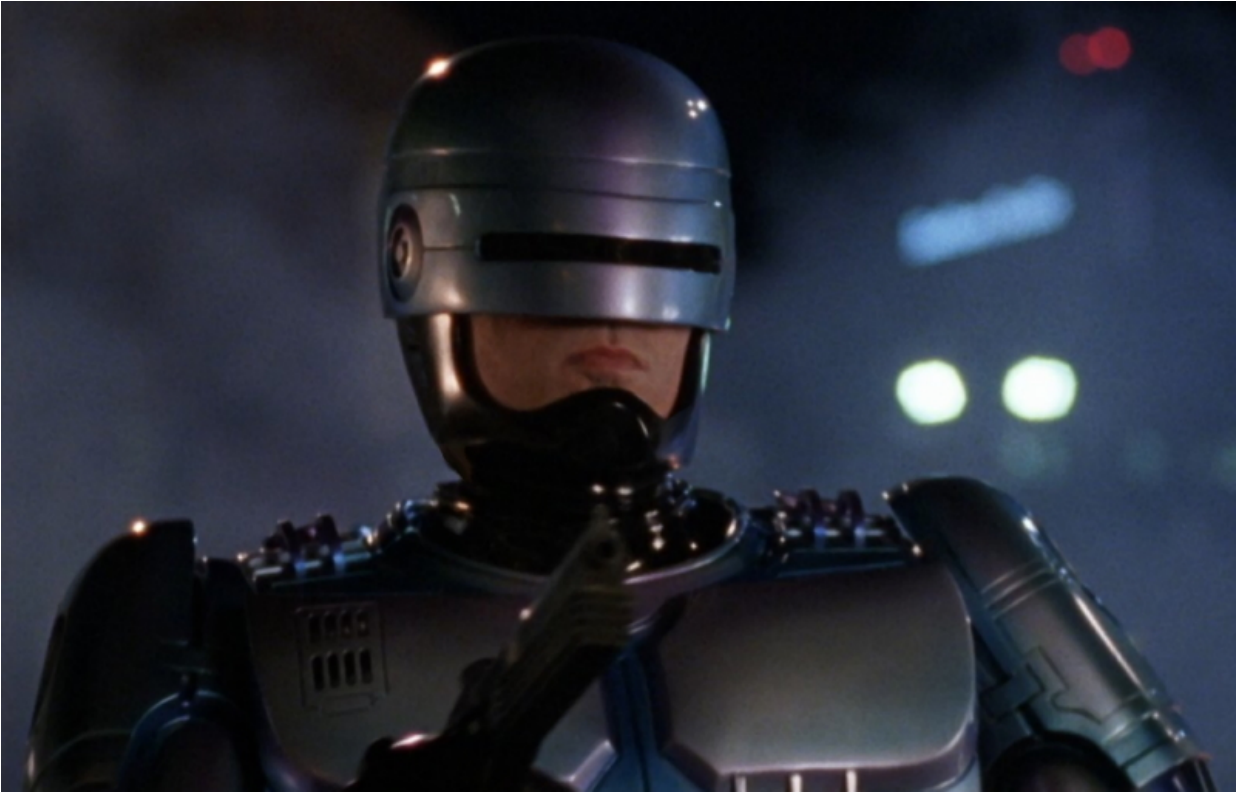
(Johnson and Fleck are walking in OCP, looking at the chaos around them)

Fleck: Between me and you, Johnson, I think the CEO's startin' to lose it. I mean, take a look around, will you? It's the Fall of Rome around here! It's Darwin time, you know what I'm saying? Survival of the least expendable.

Johnson: Remember the Old Man, Jeff. Everyone's expendable.

On the contrary, if you enjoyed the first two RoboCop action-platformers, the third installment builds upon their respectable foundations rather nicely, resulting in a cross between Operation Wolf, Dragon Ninja and... oh yes, *RoboCop*. That old chestnut which made itself at home in the sales chart's no. 1 slot for twelve months!

"RoboCop 3 is action all the way, and should keep even the most expert gameplayers protecting the innocent for ages - just make sure that you've got a large enough supply of baby food!"

Zzap! (92%, March 1992)
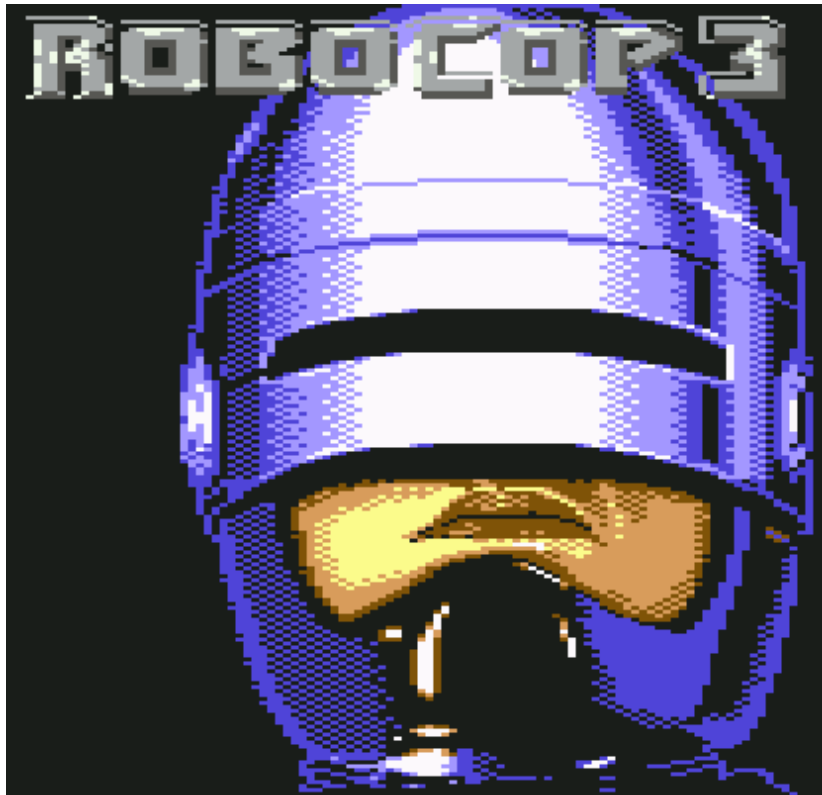
"Any self respecting fan of the Robocop series cannot be without this game. In my opinion its the best yet."

Crash (89%, April 1992)

What feels so off kilter with RoboCop 3 - even held up under a spotlight next to the movie - is the uncharacteristically agile motion of our protagonist sprite. There was debate at the time of the first release with regards to whether RoboCop should be able to jump at all since it's not something that's factored into the movie on which it's based. Whilst it's possible in *some* of the games (not the Spectrum), jumping tends to be more understated and subtle than in your average anthropomorphic platform-bounding affair what with RoboCop weighing 300lb in his full body armour. Sometimes even movies get internal logic right!

It's something you have to let go if you're to enjoy the C64/Spectrum game. It's not as if the movie pays much respect to the revered character's legacy anyway.
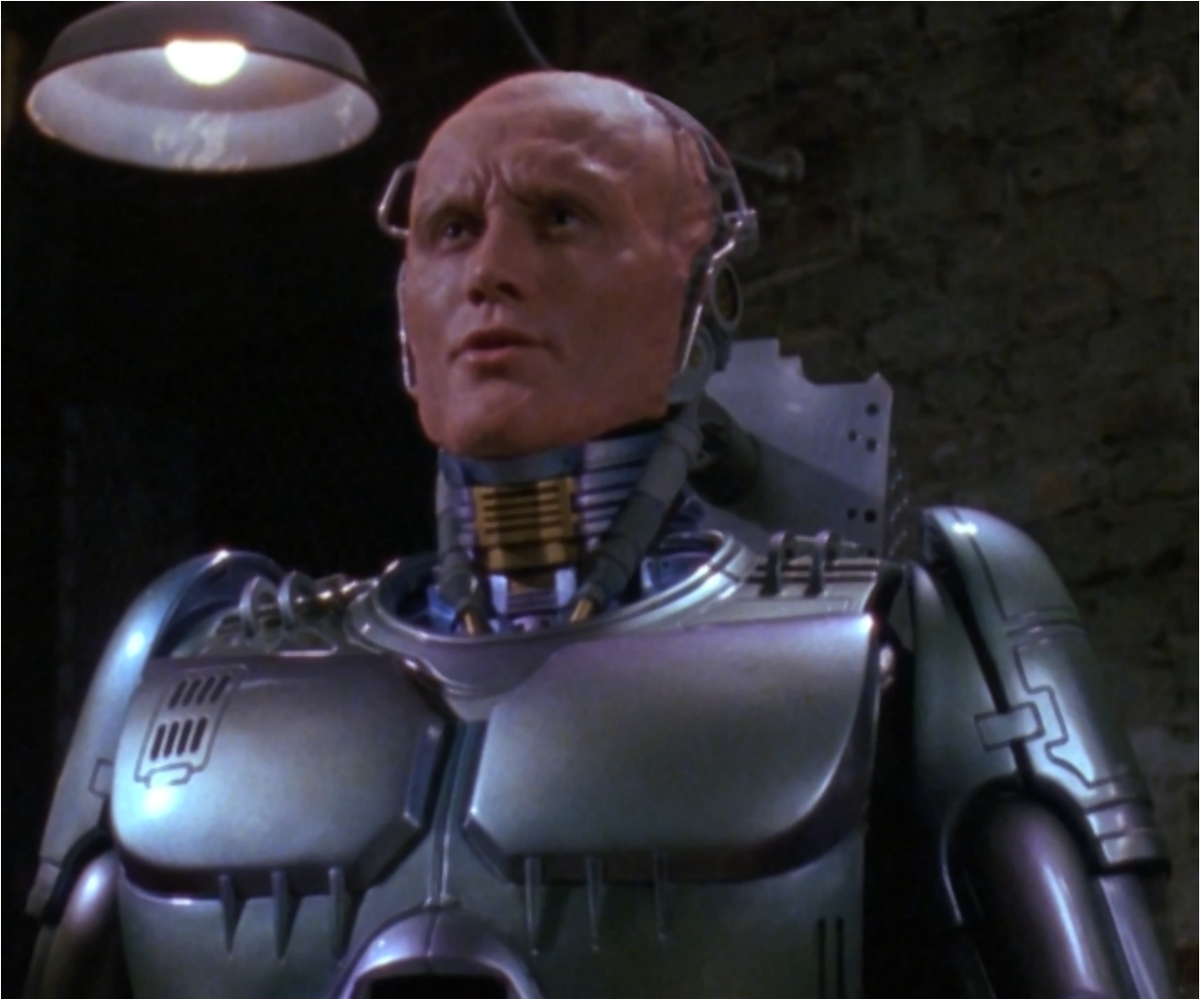
Peter Weller isn't in it on account of being busy filming Naked Lunch at the time. He was replaced by Robert John Burke, his physical disparities construed by RoboCop's dalliance with fiery disfigurement and facial reconstruction.

Rip Torn now takes The Old Man's place as OCP's CEO, whilst Nancy Allen made a comeback on the proviso that her character, Anne Lewis, was laid to rest, closing the door on any future appearances. Some consolation at least to see her reprise the role, even if it's short-lived and her talents underutilised.

Officer Anne Lewis: We're police officers.

Paul McDaggett: We don't want you. We have reason to believe there are squatters in that structure. Now, step away from the door.

Officer Anne Lewis: There're civilians inside. They're just trying to stay warm.

Paul McDaggett: Those people belong in the nearest rehabilitation center. Some of them are armed terrorists. Now, step away from the door or you'll be cited for obstructing justice. Look, I'm not gonna ask politely next time, now step away from the door. This is your final warning.

Robocop: (shoots at McDaggett's feet) You are making a mistake. Back off, or there will be trouble.

Officer Anne Lewis: Now you're talking, Murphy. We're not budging. If you wanna get in there, you're gonna have to shoot through us.

Paul McDaggett: I don't have a huge problem with that.

(guns down Officer Lewis)

Nevertheless, the extreme, shocking violence - one of the key factors that made the first movie so memorable - was abandoned in favour of slapstick comedy, embracing a kiddie-friendly PG-13 audience and hopefully higher box

office revenue. A blase attitude towards death is to be expected, not so much the total sanitisation.

Officer Anne Lewis: Are they gone?

Robocop: I'm still scanning three.

(catches a bullet in his hand and fires his gun offscreen)

Robocop: Make that... two.

For a million and one reasons including terrible dialogue, the absence of Paul Verhoeven's influence, dropping the social satire like a hot spud, wooden acting, boring cliched baddies and shoddy special effects, the gamble spectacularly failed to pay off. It wasn't even deemed worthy of novelisation as with parts 1 and 2.

Bixby Snyder: I'll buy that for a dollar!

You might be the only one. RoboCop 3 actually made a substantial loss at the cinema rather than winning over a new, younger fanbase. Less than *half* of the $22m budget, in fact, was clawed back. What's odd is that this wasn't new territory for the franchise. An animated, laser-shooting series targeted at kids was launched in October 1988... and abandoned in December after broadcasting only 12 episodes. Maybe they too would only settle for the real deal with its unadulterated grisliness and biting cynicism.

A similar, family-friendly concept was unveiled in 1994; a live-action TV series starring Richard Eden. Whilst eschewing the second and third movie, new-age RoboCop works hard to find alternative ways to apprehend criminals owing to his aversion to lethal force. This also lasted for only a single series (due to infeasible production costs), though this time stretched out to encompass 22 episodes.

One thing the producers *did* get right in RoboCop 3 is the inclusion of everyone's favourite homicidal euthanising machine, ED-209. Although, sadly, it's turned into a laughing stock, outwitted by a tiny precocious girl called Nikko who somehow happens to be an elite hacker nerd prodigy capable of reprogramming anything with a chip in it, as well as intercepting the TV signal to deliver her own alternative broadcasts. Remember Nikko remote control cars? I had a Black Cat. That was awesomeness carsonified. Sorry, I got distracted for a moment.

ED-209: I am now authorized to... be loyal as a puppy.

People like to mock the scene in which Nikko instructs ED-209 to be "as loyal as a puppy" as if that's the only command required to completely debilitate the high-tech assassin, but isn't this just what it verbalises to let us know the hijacking has been successful? I imagine we're supposed to presume something more elaborate occurred in the meantime. Do we really need to see her bashing away at that slab of a laptop to get the gist?

Regardless it would be sacrilege to dismiss ED in either medium, so you can expect to encounter RoboCop's forever-foe on the small screen too, along with a tank as featured in the movie.

ED-209's portrayal in the SNES, Genesis, Game Gear and Master System game developed by Ocean goes above and beyond the call of duty, outshining their 8-bit computer counterparts. Nikko actually puts in a cameo appearance, brainwashing the enemy bot to provide backup missile cover for RoboCop while he holds off OCP's shambolic makeshift army. In Probe's NES variant, ED-209 is a traditional enemy that needs to be showered with shrapnel.
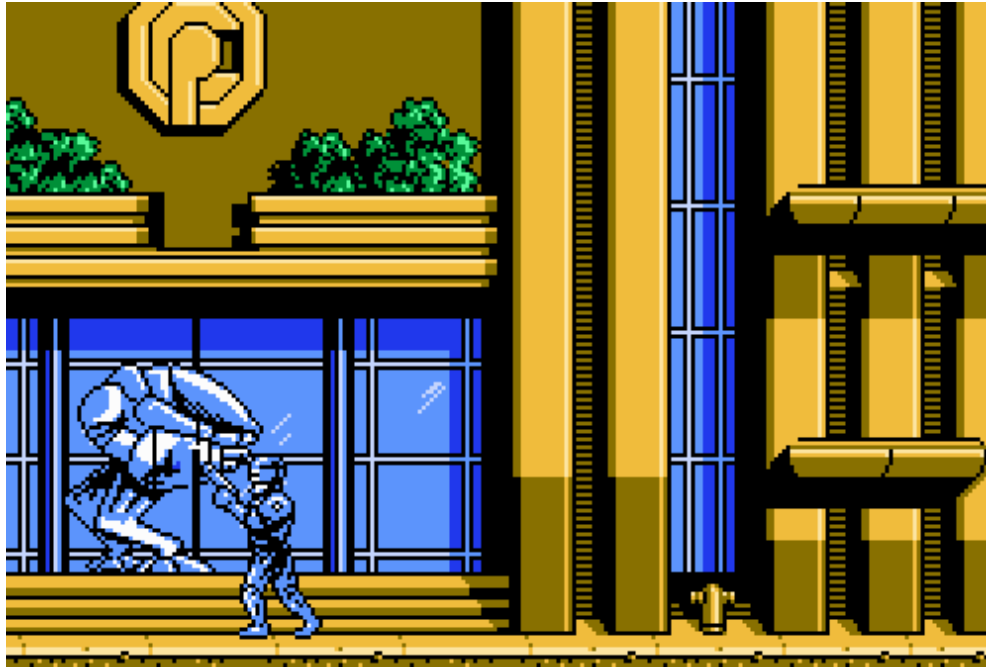
If you recall, RoboCop 3's plot revolves around a hostile Japanese-led takeover of Detroit, spearheaded by heartless capitalist tycoon and current owner of OCP, Kanemitsu. Manipulating the city into defaulting on their debt, OCP intends to wrestle control from the populace, evicting the vulnerable civilians to make way for "the city of the future". Naturally, being Japanese makes the invaders callous, ruthless murderers who have no qualms over bulldozing people's homes whilst they remain occupied.

 That's where the tank comes in, along with an army of recruited mercenaries known as Splatterpunks, and cyborg ninjas. Well, an eviction order *was* served first so all's fair in dystopian abode-razing and racial stereotyping. Remember WWII? You can't be too careful. That utopian dream of a new-age, touchy-feely Delta City is fading faster than ever it would seem.

Robocop: (to Otomo) Detroit police. Identify yourself. You are under arrest for assaulting an officer.

(Robocop draws for his Auto-9, Otomo knocks it away and cuts off Robocop's fingers)

Robocop: And destruction of police property.

OCP initially intend for the police to do their dirty work, so are shocked to discover the boys in blue possess moral scruples and want nothing to do with the reprehensible scheme. Relinquishing their badges and pensions, they go on strike to assist the rebels.

McDaggett: Sergeant. We're taking Cadillac Heights. I'll need fifty of your men armed and in full body armor in one hour. Mr. Johnson, you can tell the C.E.O. the demolition crews will have total access at 0600 hours tomorrow morning.

Sergeant Warren Reed: Hey, we don't do that kind of work.

McDaggett: That was a direct order, sergeant.

Sergeant Warren Reed: Driving people out of their homes is no work for a cop.

Johnson: Now, sergeant... fifteen years on the force is quite an investment. Your job, your pension... Maybe instead of worrying about these squatter people, you might think about your OWN family.

Sergeant Warren Reed: I am.

(Takes off his badge and throws it on the floor)

Sergeant Warren Reed: I'm thinking I have to go home and face them.

(Reed leaves. One by one, other officers drop their badges and walk out as well)

Johnson: You can't do this! Look, you are employees of O.C.P. Now remember that! You're jeopardizing your retirement benefits!

Luckily they have the ultimate weapon in their corner to tip the balance; RoboCop. And this time he can fly, courtesy of a jetpack prototype Dr Lazarus had been working on before being ousted from her lab for showing compassion for the former Alex Murphy.
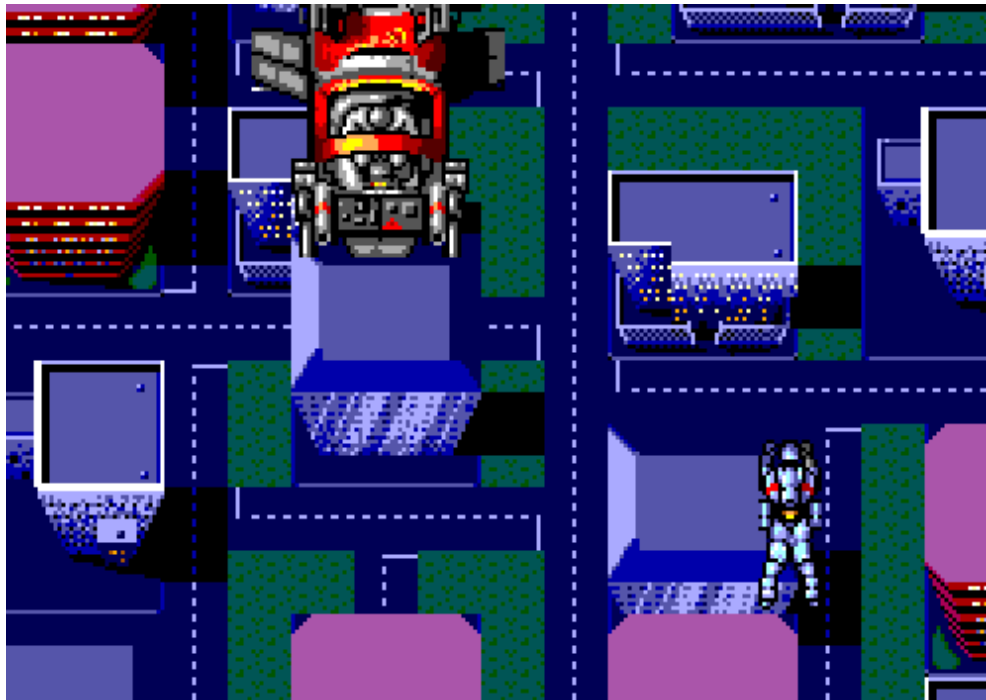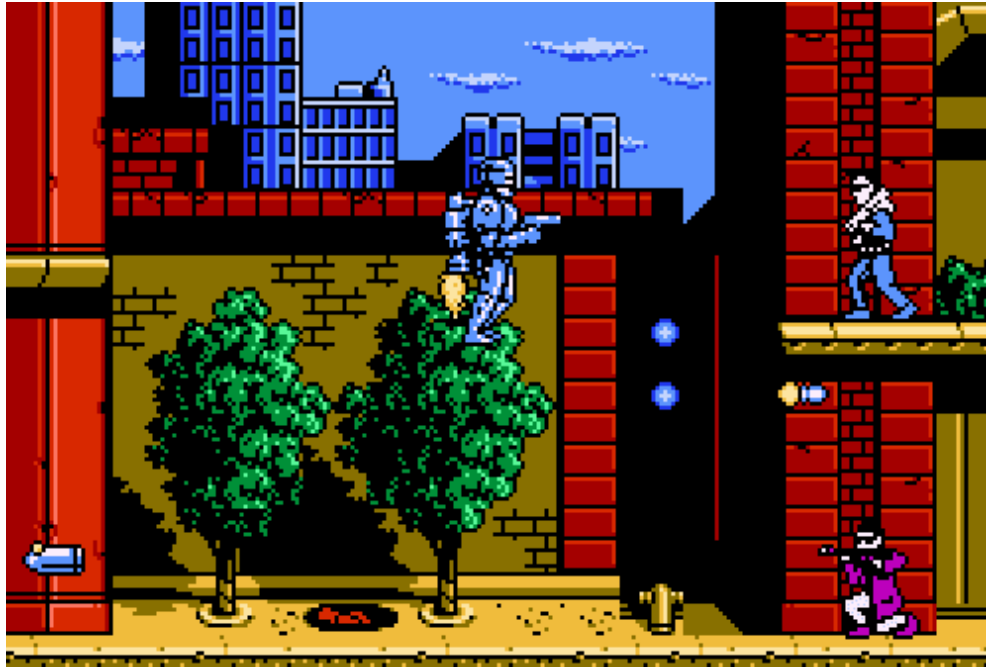
RoboCop's new means of transport features in both the computer and console games. In the 8-bit Spectrum and Commodore 64 versions we take to the skies remaining in side-scroller mode, whereas a switch to a top-down

perspective is evident in the 16-bit console upgrades and Master System iteration.

Dr. Marie Lazarus: Oh, my God. How did you get this?

Bertha: Stole it from the police depot. Why?

Moreno: You know, this looks like the exhaust system

from an F-27.

Dr. Marie Lazarus: No, it's the prototype for Robo's flight pack. The funding ran out before we got a chance to test it.

Bertha: How do you know so much about it?

Dr. Marie Lazarus: Oh, I designed it.

Zack: (chortles) Well, it looks like the odds on the home team just went up.

Highly unusual for the era, Ocean's game was released long before the movie's unveiling. Initially projected an ETA of Autumn 1991, it wasn't until April 1992 when Crash magazine were able to assess the Spectrum iteration. A month earlier Sinclair User made RoboCop the cover star of their March issue, which included a musical slideshow demo of the upcoming game as well as a double page poster and

full page ad. An awkward situation should it have reviewed poorly the following month you would imagine.

Sinclair User (88%, May 1992)

Another year passed before the movie hit theatres in Japan due to Orion's financial struggles, whereas Americans had to wait until November 1993 and Brits even longer; June 1994 to be precise. In hindsight it would be hard to argue that this represented a failure to cash in on the movie's hype and anticipation since there was little of either in evidence. Had Ocean delayed the game's release to coincide with the much belated movie, the already dwindling 8-bit user base may have gone MIA in the meantime.

Unsurprisingly, RoboCop 3 is a traditional platformer in most

respects, despite its hybrid genre nature. Ocean had already introduced and perfected that aspect with RoboCop 1 so this is more evo than revo. Lutionary that is.

> "The thing is certainly high quality though. There's an awful lot going on and it's all got good graphics and plenty of gameplay. Perhaps not earth-shattering, but certainly great to settle down with for a few hours. One thing - Robocop 3 won't be easy to finish. I'll be surprised if the whole game can be complete in a few days."
> **Commodore Format (70%, March 1992)**

What's slightly different here is that the game opens with a first person perspective shootout rather than building up to what would be minor diversions in the first game. Targeting too is unorthodox in that we must now hover over marks with our reticule, wait for the sight to lock on and *then* shoot. Not quite as rapid-fire as we'd come to expect from playing similar games such as Cabal and Operation Thunderbolt, albeit in alignment with the movies in which RoboCop cautiously analyses everything via his optical HUD before pulling the trigger. How jolly responsible. Horizontal scrolling
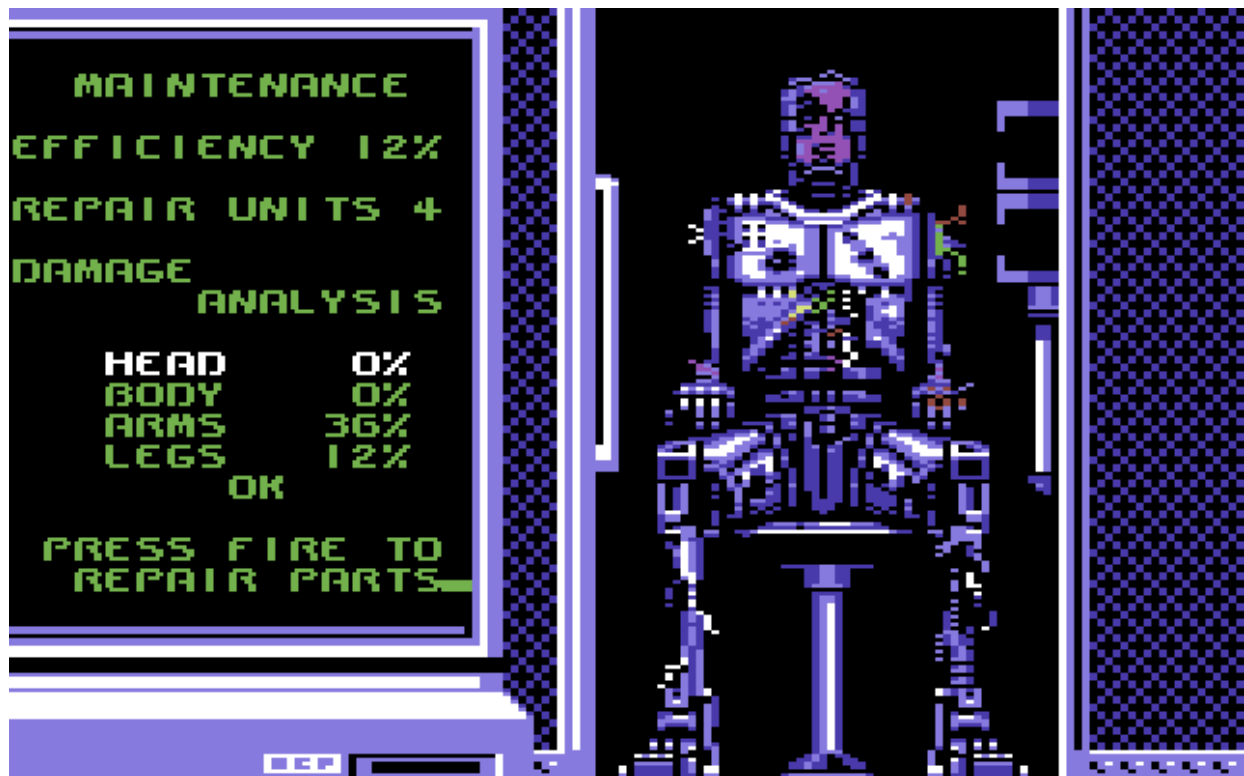
is also new, fixed, single screen routines retired much like the once-human Alex Murphy.
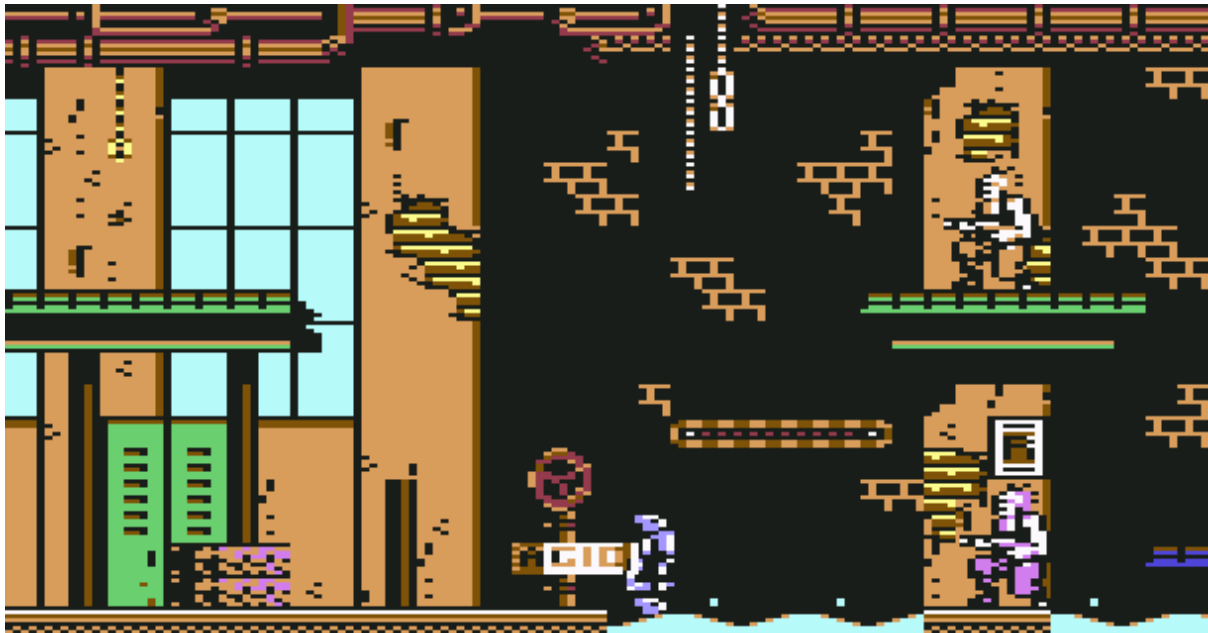
"Splatterpunks and robotic ninjas are just two of the many deadly adversaries whose aim is to defeat Robocop. Select the right weapon at the right time and you can become more than a match for the enemy. Repair your battered armour, strap on the jet pack, and confront the lethal ED209."

Thanks box blurb. That reminds me, repairs take place at the end of each level, the extent of which dependent on how many repair tokens we've managed to scoop up along the way.

MAINTENANCE

EFFICIENCY 12%

REPAIR UNITS 4

DAMAGE
          ANALYSIS

HEAD   0%
BODY   0%
ARMS   36%
LEGS   12%
      OK

PRESS FIRE TO
  REPAIR PARTS

This scenario aims to mirror the relevant scene from the movie where scientist/technician Dr Lazarus is drafted in to get RoboCop back online. Only *she* has the technical know-how and equipment necessary to delete directive 4, and raise him from the dead appropriately enough.

This wasn't the only gaming jaunt for the Otomo ninjas it's worth noting. Bruce Locke who played all three, also portrayed Shang Tsung in the 1998 'Mortal Kombat: Conquest' TV series, obviously based on the game of the same-ish name. A tenuous connection admittedly, and Shang Tsung is a shape-shifting warlock, not a ninja. Just ignore me. Bruce himself *has* appeared in eight video games during the course of his career, however.

During the platforming stages it's possible to collect power-ups by smashing open crates as in the previous games. We can upgrade RoboCop's pistol to rapid-fire mode, and subsequently a threeway catch-all obliterator. P tokens further extend our chance of survival; conferring an infinite supply of bullets tends to have that effect. More efficient still is the ammo-limited flamethrower, laser gun and guided missile launcher. No insurgent's arsenal is complete without them.


Jumping, which wasn't possible at all in some of the earlier RoboCop games, is executed using the joystick's up direction. Whereas the spacebar was reserved for this function in the Amiga game (that or down followed by up), it's now used to switch between weapons.

With the exception of the Spectrum's disappointing monochrome graphics, everything is an improvement as you'd hope. RoboCop's jetpack flight actually looks more believable than in the movie, which is less of a compliment than you might imagine given the quality of the ropey

special effects. Well, all except for the morphing interlude.
That has at least stood the test of time.

"Robocop enters the derelict Rocket Motors factory and is
attacked by Rehabs and Splatterpunks. He must fight his
way through and defeat the deadly Otomo Ninja."
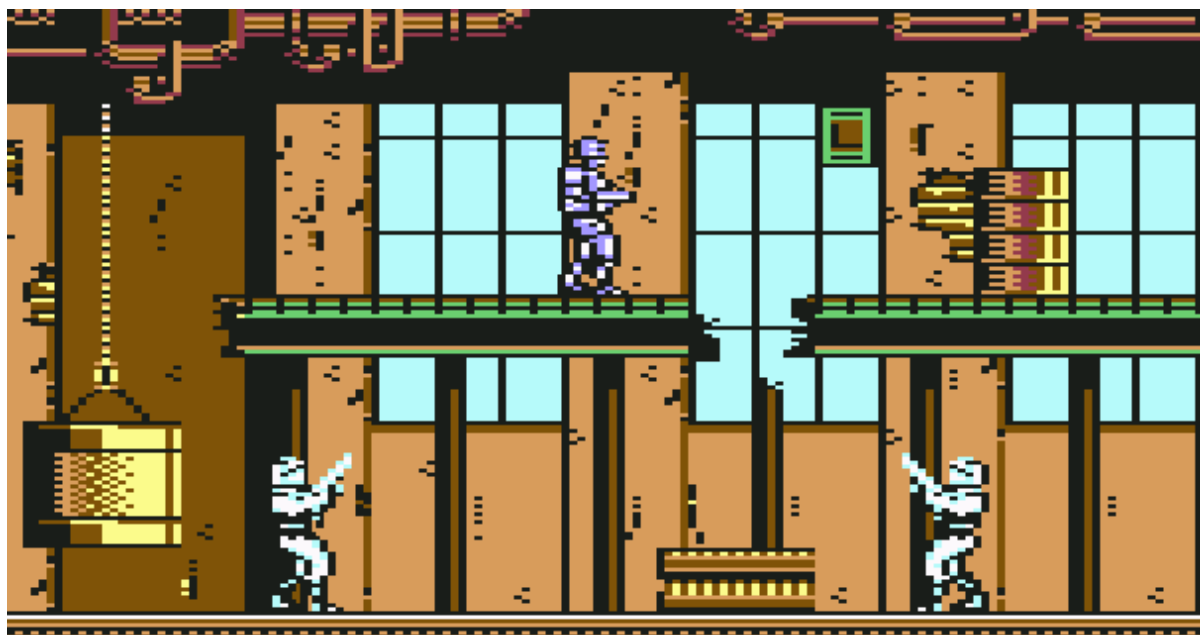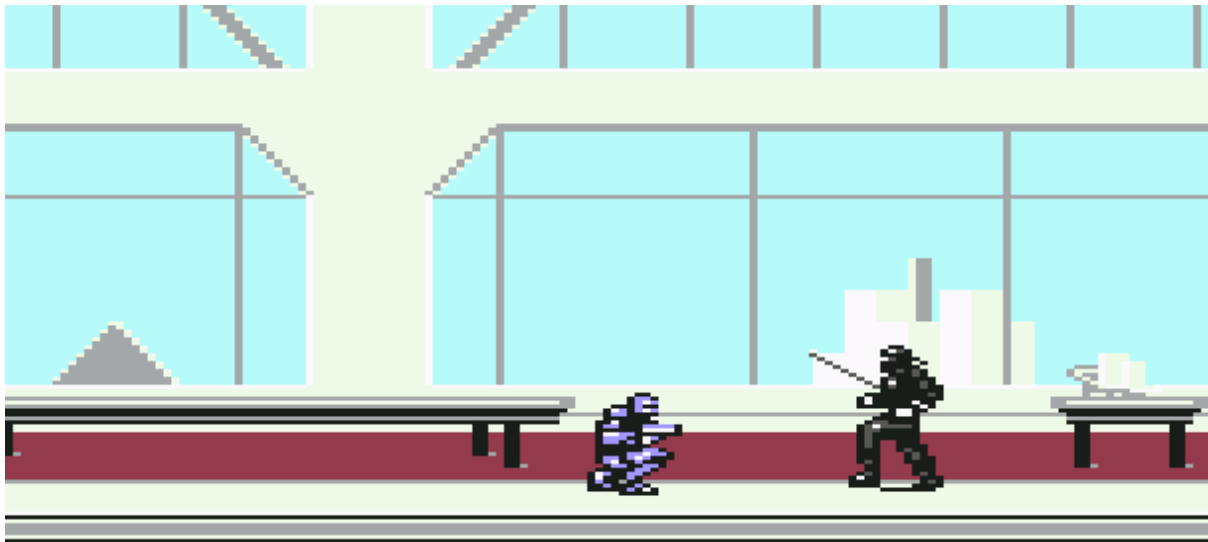
That will be the rebels' hideout (filmed in Atlanta), where they hash out their defensive strategies and attempt to repair RoboCop. In the movie, one of the party, Coontz, betrays them to the OCP commander in chief, McDaggitt, who wastes no time in storming the base with his euphemistic 'rehab' goons and Otomo ninja. Not the Splatterpunks at this stage. They're bribed to fight for OCP later on once the police switch allegiances.

At this stage RoboCop believes he's only up against *one* android ninja. It's not until the finale sequence that he realises one becomes two (like the Spice Girls song in reverse). Save for one having a mashed face, they're identical clones. Actually that makes *three* ninjas including the one RoboCop defeated in the abandoned factory by obliterating its head with a missile fired from his reattached gun-arm launcher. Strangely this model doesn't come equipped with a fail-safe detonator.
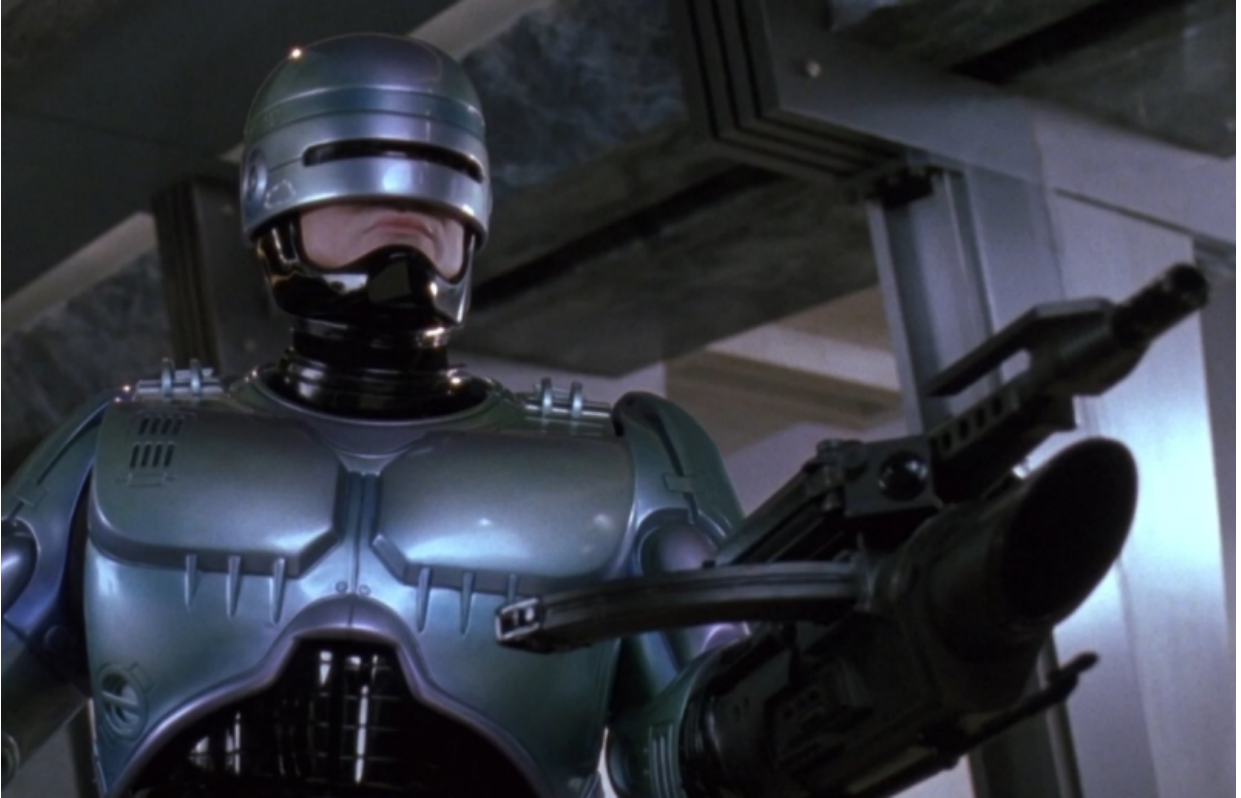
"Robocop dons a powerful jetpack and flies along the streets of Cadillac Heights avoiding the jetpack clad rehabs, and also the rehabs and Splatterpunks on ledges and the pavements below. He must locate and destroy a heavily armoured tank before he can continue."

A bit of artistic licence methinks; in the movie only RoboCop has the technology to fly. This is a cutting edge development that remains a work in progress, explaining why his trajectory is unpredictable and precarious. Well, you've got to inject a bit of artificial trepidation wherever you can - RoboCop 3 veers depressingly into live-action cartoon territory with little to endear it to fans of the original, gory, no holds barred proposition.

"With the fuel in the jetpack now spent, Robocop must walk back the way he has come to the OCP tower. He must avoid the swooping helicopter that strafes the ground.
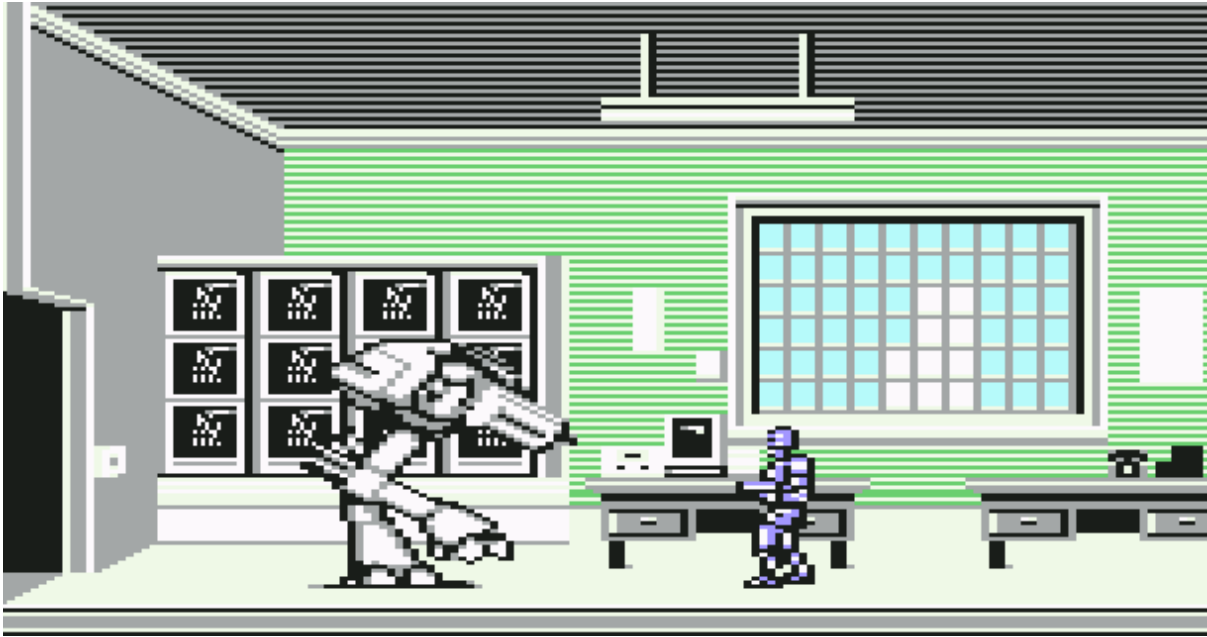
On reaching OCP tower, Robocop is confronted by ED209 who is guarding the entrance. He must be defeated and destroyed before Robocop can proceed."
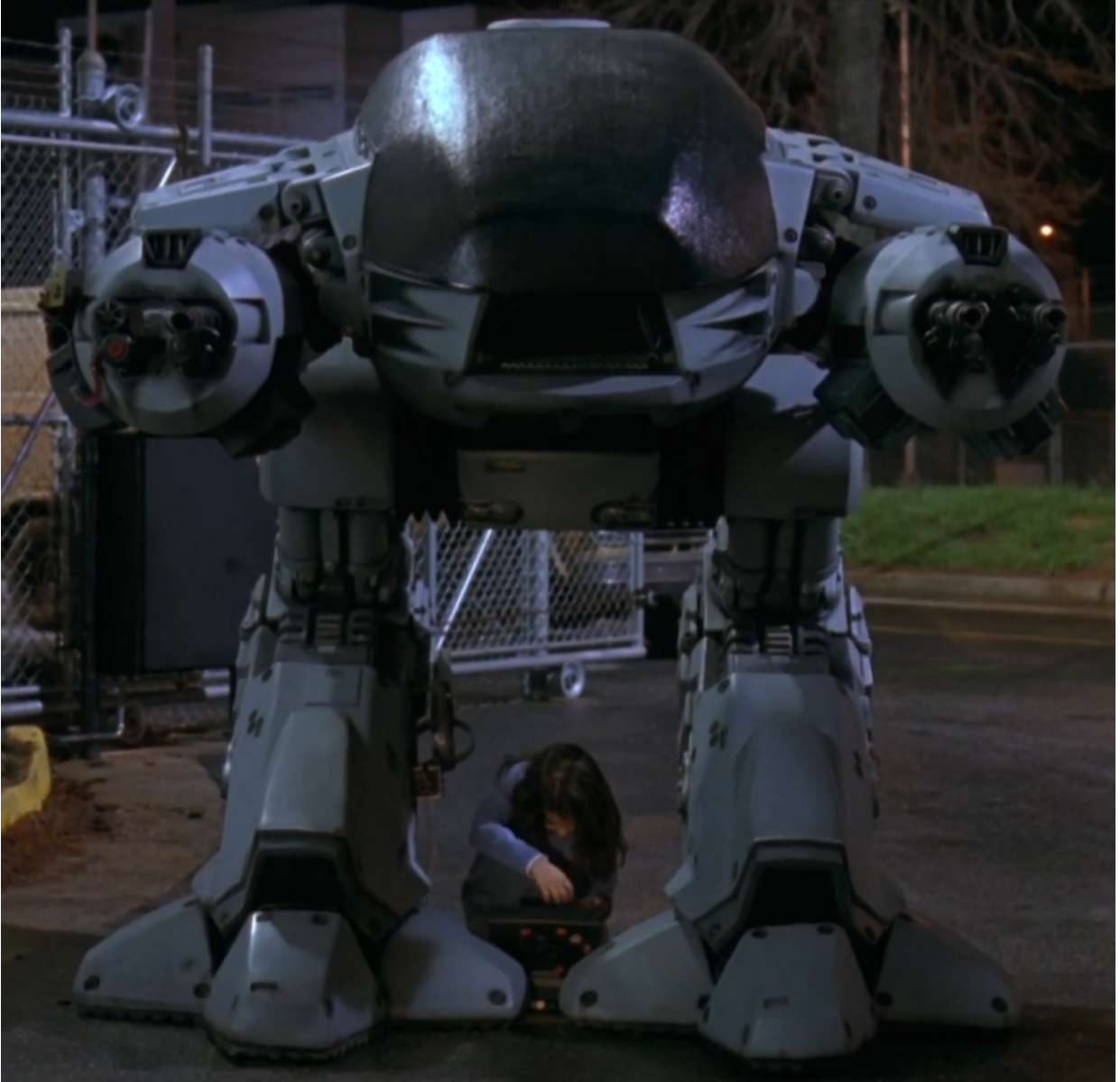
Actually, RoboCop enters OCP tower aerially, smashing through the window propelled by his jetpack so there's no need to tackle ED-209 again. A helicopter *does* feature on the big screen too so you can see where the budget was spent.
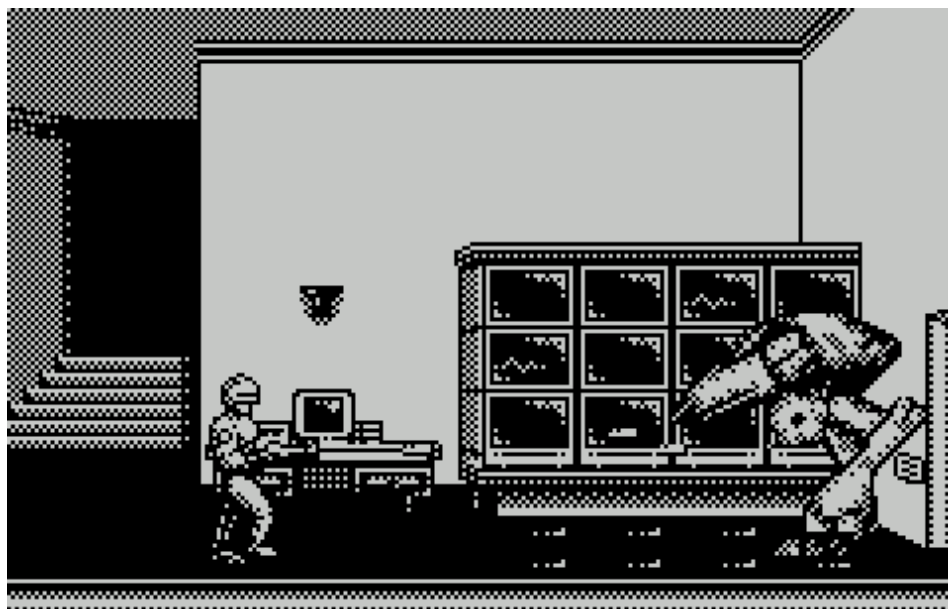
"Robocop must now make his way to the top of the OCP tower to confront the final Otomo Ninja Robots who stand in his way."

I have to say, despite RoboCop 3's flaws, I quite like the way the ninjas bite the dust. RoboCop is outnumbered and outmanoeuvred, then Nikko steps in to wirelessly reprogramme the Otomo to attack one another, remotely decapitating them before they can recycle the main man, erm, *cyborg*.

This scenario is neatly mirrored in the SNES, Game Gear and Master System game, although we must face the double ninja dilemma alone since the alternative would be cheating. Nikko can be spotted tapping away at her laptop in the background without actually achieving anything.
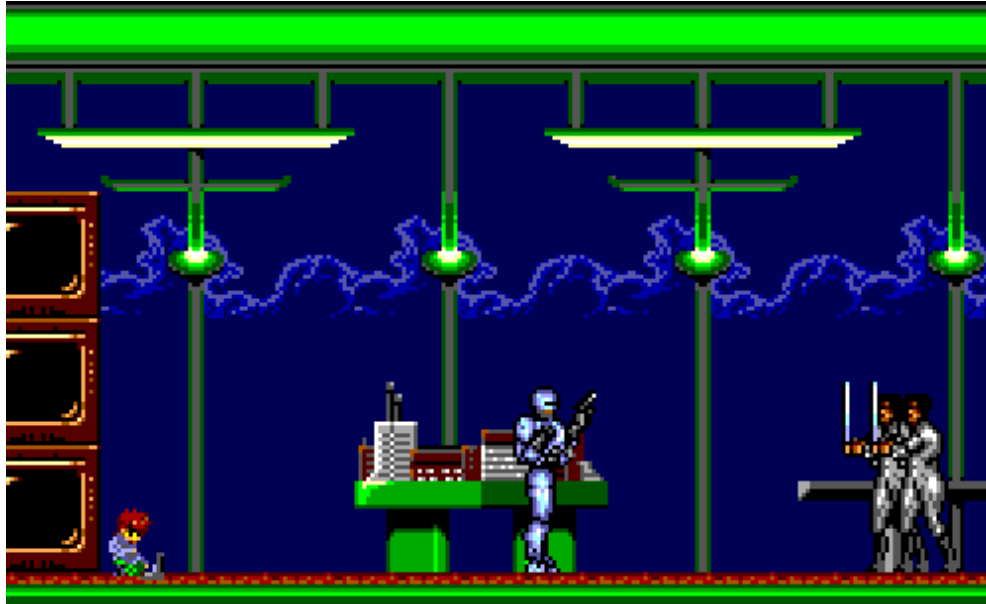
She's AWOL in the corresponding segment of the Mega Drive incarnation, disappointingly. Inexplicably, in the NES interpretation she's known as Keiko and can be seen beavering away at clever hackery shenanigans. Nonetheless, it's RoboCop who actually enters the passcode into OCP's computer that allows her to magically scramble the androids' neural circuitry, turning them against each other.
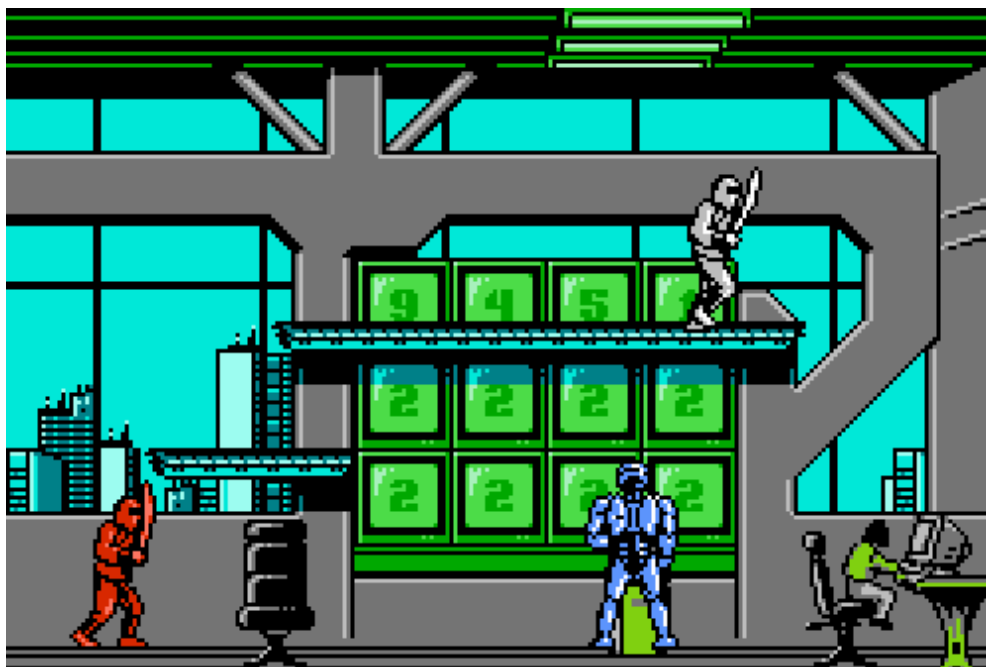
Moviewise, the nature of the ninja's demise is to be expected given the earlier foreshadowing, yet still feels kind of refreshing. Kids don't typically defeat lethal, unstoppable killing machines single handedly in (formerly) adult-oriented action movies. If you pretend that part three has nothing at all to do with the original RoboCop movie, it's almost ...*fun*.

> Paul McDaggett: (after the androids behead each other) Stupid fools. Don't you know what you've done to us? Those androids are programmed with a thermal failsafe device.
>
> Dr. Marie Lazarus: They're made to self-destruct?
>
> Paul McDaggett: In fifteen seconds, everything within twenty yards of where we're standing will be atomised. We're DEAD, ya stupid slag!
>
> Robocop: Don't count on it, chum.

McDaggett has an irritating 'British' habit of calling everyone chum so that accounts for that reference. It's a comic callback.

Slag? Did screenplay writer, Frank Miller, learn everything he thinks he knows about British dialect from watching EastEnders and reading Viz? The word isn't even remotely relevant here. Lazarus is the big-hearted, prim and proper, girl next door type, reminding us that McDaggett is reading a terrible script rather than embodying evil incarnate. His core nemesis credentials involve simply being a 'limey'. That was deemed enough to intimate an air of evil machinations.

Ocean's interpretation of RoboCop 3, five years earlier, would likely have lodged itself at the apex of the sales charts in much the same way as the original. Except back then it wouldn't have been delivered on a load-time demolishing C64 cartridge.

In 1992 it was merely another respectable, polished platformer, combining the best bits of various popular genres without offering anything especially radical. By the time the movie hit UK shores, its accompanying game would have been available as a budget release, sidelined by more current, premium licensed fare. We often wonder if movie tie-in games would have stood up to scrutiny without the silver screen connection. This was our chance to find out.